Sirhan Hits Treatment, Stages a Fast

SAN QUENTIN, Calif., Dec. 8 (AP)—Sirhan Sirhan, under a death sentence for the slaying of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, has been on a hunger strike since Nov. 28 at San Quentin Prison, officials disclosed today.

Sirhan, 25, says he is protesting the "Nazi concentration camp-like treatment" he is receiving on Death Row, said Associate Warden James W. L. Park.

Park said the hunger strike was not announced immediately because officials weren't sure Sirhan was actually fasting.

"He eats very little anyway—no more than one meal a day—and we weren't exactly sure he was on a hunger strike," Park said. He said Sirhan "has subsisted on a diet of instant cocoa and coffee" since starting to refuse food.

Sirhan entered San Quentin two days after being sentenced to the gas chamber for the June 5, 1968, shooting of Kennedy in Los Angeles. Sirhan is appealing the sentence.

Park said he received a letter from Sirhan Nov. 28 saying: "—you and your prison, I am going on that hunger strike to protest this Nazi concentration camp-like treatment of yours. Hitler had more mercy than you do."

Park said Sirhan demanded that a screen at the back of his cell area be opened so he could "talk with other condemned men without shouting." He also wanted to exercise with other prisoners.

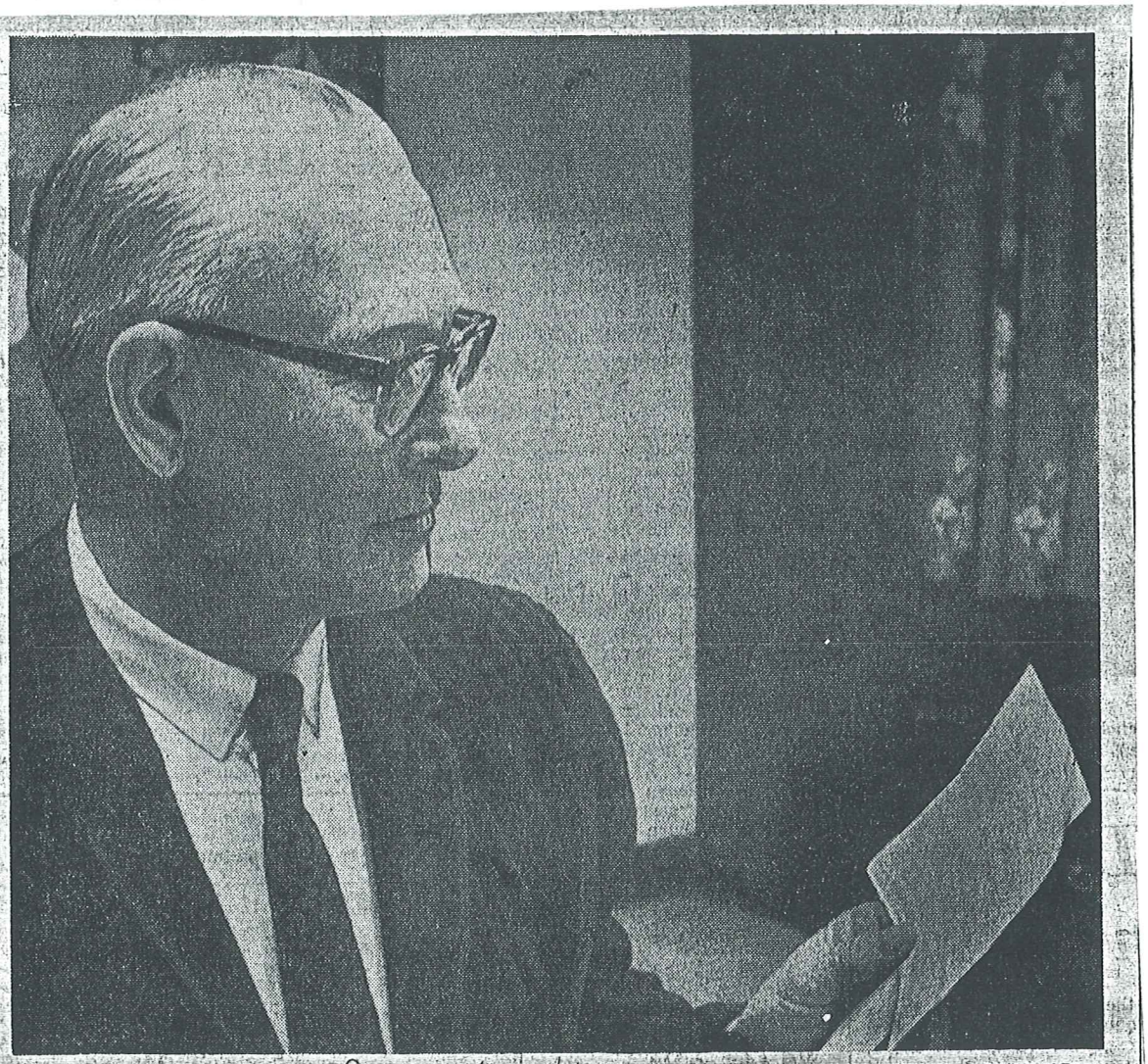
Sirhan at present can converse with other prisoners only across a 15-foot-wide no man's land that separates his area from the other 72 men on Death Row.

Park said the prison administration denied Sirhan's request because "it poses a hazard to his safety. Someone could stick a sharp bedspring or toothbrush or improvised weapon into his gut."

Park added: "he said he'd sign a waiver exonerating us of responsibility, but there's no way he can take us off the hook for his safety, and we intend to maintain it."

Park said there has been "at least one concrete death threat" against Sirhan. "We believe it was from one of the condemned men."

"This consisted of a newspaper article with his picture with a black hand drawn in over his face. The word 'doomed' was printed underneath and a little stick figure was holding a knife."



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Warden Louis Nelson of San Quentin Prison studies note from Sirhan Sirhan complaining of ill-treatment on Death Row.